

Southwest Texas Conference information

San Angelo woman recognized for service

A San Angelo laywoman won recognition May 16 for service to her church and random acts of kindness to the community's least fortunate in the name of God.

Mary Hankins, a member of Wesley UMC, San Angelo, received the 1998 Bishop's Exemplar Award during the San Angelo District Celebration.

Bishop Ray Owen presents the honor annually to a lay person in each district "for witness, commitment and service after the example of our Lord Jesus Christ."

"I'm very honored to receive this award," Hankins told the more than 170 people at the event. "I think God has blessed me to be in this place at this time."

"I like helping others. But I could not do it without the support of my family, church and a lot of you out there who help me do what I do."

Hankins, who moved to Corpus

Christi in June, had been volunteer director of the Daily Bread Soup Kitchen at Wesley UMC since 1987. She represented the soup kitchen at various community groups and coordinated the work of 55 volunteers.

Last year she organized a Christmas party for soup kitchen patrons and presented gifts to 85 children.

In addition, Hankins serves on the State Bar of Texas Grievance Committee, which reviews complaints against attorneys, and a local bank community advisory board.

She is a past board member for:

- Fort Concho Museum.
- San Angelo Healthy Families.
- Concho Valley Food Bank.
- Angelo Day Nursery.

She chairs the conference Commission on Religion and Race and is secretary of the conference Council on Ministries.

Hankins has been active in United Methodist Women, filling various dis-

trict and conference leadership posts.

At her church she has taught a Sunday school class for young people for the past three years.

Eighty-two members of other local churches as well as the entire congregation of Veribest UMC received Discipleship Awards for distinguished Christian witness and service.

The group included 9-year-old Casey Simons from First UMC, Paint Rock. Owen said Casey, daughter of Frank Simons, was the first youngster to earn special district recognition for discipleship during his six years as bishop.

"I am very proud of you, Casey," the bishop said. "We sometimes forget that children are not the church of the future. They are the church of today."

Casey was cited as an example to all for her faithful attendance, Bible studies, participation in church activities and willingness to help anywhere she is asked.

UMs join other denominations in local initiative for children

United Methodists joined other Christians in voicing concern for needy youngsters June 6-7 in San Antonio during a "Children's Faith Initiative."

The ecumenical effort, originally proposed last year by Bishop Ray Owen, involved members of seven denominations, including the United Methodist Church.

Bonnie Terry, a member of Jefferson UMC, San Antonio, chaired the citywide initiative. It included a June 6 "Stand for Children" rally in San Antonio's Milam Park.

"I think it's great that Methodists are putting children first," Terry said. "That's what the Children's Faith Initiative is also advocating. We're getting our churches more involved in getting kids more involved."

The 1998 Southwest Texas Conference core discipline is "Putting Children First."

As part of the San Antonio effort, congregations in all participating denominations made special efforts to involve children in June 7 worship.

At Jefferson UMC, for example, worshipers used goldfish crackers instead of bread as a Holy Communion element.

At Oak Meadow UMC, San Antonio, Pastor Emet B. Huntsman included children in the June 7 service. But he said that wasn't anything special.

"It wasn't just a one-time deal during 'Stand for Children,'" Huntsman said. "We include kids in our worship services each Sunday."

At St. John's UMC, San Antonio, children were ushers June 7, said the Rev. William Hughes, pastor.

The San Antonio Community of Churches co-sponsored the citywide faith initiative with the Vision for Children Center.

1st services draw 300 to Austin-area UMCs

Nearly 300 people came to the first services of two Austin-area congregations in May.

More than 70 people—white, black and Mexican-American—attended the inaugural service May 10 at Dove Springs UMC, Austin. The fellowship, led by Pastor Dionisio Salazar, is growing from seeds planted by an annual Austin District Vacation Bible School in south Austin.

More than 210 people took part in the initial worship service at The Rock UMC May 17 in Whitestone Elementary School, Cedar Park. The Rev. Robert Haringa is pastor.

The congregations are the third and fourth launched by the Southwest Texas Conference since September.